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Fcc: /jm/BIOG, /jm/NLM
Subject: Chargaff memoir
Reply-to: lederberg@mail.rockefeller.edu

Chargaff ↓
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Dear Seymour

Thanks to you and Barbee for that vignette, which I enjoyed reading.
You have a specially well-informed vantage point.

I'm equally interested in Seymour Cohen's vision of the Dawn of DNA
as gene: can you enlighten me, how did you come to hear of the
Avery lab work, and what was your initial reaction? Did you hear
any rumor during your earlier stint at RIMR?

--- back to Chargaff ---

On page 2, you have "waltzing Vienna"; next page it is "nagging,
malevolent and immobile", compared to Berlin.

P. 1, first paragraph, Chargaff hears of Avery in 1944. The paper
appeared in JEM on Feb. 1, 1944 (and the journal was promptly
available at P&S). Do you have any idea just when Chargaff did
first hear about it? The work was fairly common currency at
Columbia - Morningside Heights -- a/c Alfred Mirsky's frequent visits
to Pollister. Do you find any comment in his archives. '43-'45?

Here's a personal tidbit:

Chargaff was one of my biochem instructors when I was a medical
student at P&S. My recollections of that time are dim, and conflated
with his more vehement appearances later. [disdain for paper
chromatography; insistence on "pentose"!-nucleic acids pending
isolation and (I presume mixed melting points on the sugars).].

I did find this somewhat enigmatic diary note:

April 15, 1945

"Discussion with Dr. Chargaff on the theoretical basis for the identical mobilities of proteins and coated particles. While Bull is not too clear, neither am I. We had taken it for granted that there was adequate physical theoretical foundation for that observation. The units of mobility contain no mass or mole term: $\text{cm}^2/\text{volt-sec}$. Dimensionally, this is the same as $Q/m.t$. That may be a viscosity term. "

["Bull" is Physical Biochemistry textbook].

Josh

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